

WDUZ founder, broadcaster Ben Laird dies

Ben A. Laird, the founder of Green Bay radio station WDUZ, died Thursday afternoon in a nursing home. He was 71.

Laird entered the nursing home this summer after a series of health complications. He had suffered a stroke in 1980.

He founded WDUZ in 1947 through the Green Bay Broadcasting Co. The station was located in downtown Green Bay until it was forced to move when the building was razed for construction of the new Boston Store.

It now is located at 810 Victoria St.

WDUZ added an FM station in 1967. The company also owns KSDN AM-FM, Aberdeen, S.D., Laird Broadcasting Co., part of the Laird Group, is headed by his wife, Dorothy, and owns WDUX AM-FM, Waupaca.

He recently was named

chairman of the board and was succeeded by his son, William, as president of Green Bay Broadcasting.

Laird's broadcasting career spanned 40 years. He worked nine years as a sports announcer in a period when he developed a friendship with such well-known broadcasters as Bill Stern and Harry Wismer. The legendary Red Grange was a colorman for Laird when he broadcast football games.

He did play-by-play for the ABC Blue Network covering baseball, basketball, football and hockey.

Laird played semi-pro hockey as a goalie for five years in International Falls, Minn. He was born in Winnipeg, Canada. He moved from there to a job in Appleton as a paper chemist.

Later, Laird worked for an insurance company which sponsored a sports show on WHBY, Appleton.



Ben A. Laird

From there he became manager of WOSH, Oshkosh, when he helped to originate and was one of the announcers for the University of Wisconsin football network.

His interest in sports carried over to his later years when he served as president of the Green Bay Bobcats hockey team.

Among honors he received was a community appreciation award in 1975 from the Green Bay Jaycees. In 1974 the Sons of the American Revolution presented him with the "Outstanding Citizen Award" for Wisconsin.

He was a member of the President's Committee of Carroll College, Waukesha, and was a director of the executive committee of the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame.

He also was a member of the board of directors of the Brown County Cancer Society, the Fort Howard Foundation Award of Valor committee and the Green Bay Area Visitor & Convention Bureau.

He served as a director and served as president for five years of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), was chairman for 25

years of the Affiliate Groups for the American Broadcasting Co., and was organizer and president for five years of the Wisconsin Association of Broadcasters.

During the term of former Gov. Warren Knowles, Laird was named chairman of the radio division of the State Educational Radio and Television Board.

Laird was a long-time friend of broadcaster Paul Harvey, who continues to be heard daily on WDUZ. Laird boosted Harvey's career when he was a fledgling Chicago broadcaster and Laird was on the advisory board of the new ABC network.

Harvey described Laird as "an uncommonly warm man."

Laird resided at 235 St. Francis Drive. Survivors include his wife, Dorothy, and four children, Bonnie, Minneapolis; Mrs. William (Laurie) Lamberg, Manitowoc; Ben W. and William C., both of Green Bay.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Ben A. Laird

Ben A. Laird, 71, 235 St. Francis Dr., Green Bay, died Thursday, Sept. 3, 1981, at a local nursing home. He was born July 13, 1910 at Winnipeg, Canada, son of Benjamin and Minerva Laird. He married Dorothy J. Brenner, June 23, 1941 in Green Bay.

Mr. Laird was best known in the field of radio. He was president of the Green Bay Broadcasting



Company which includes radio stations WDUZ, AM and FM, and KSDN, AM and FM at Aberdeen, S.D. He also founded the sister station, Laird Broadcasting Co., WDUX, AM and FM at Waupaca.

He was a member of the National Broadcasters Assoc. and served for eight years as president of its national board representing all stations in the United States of 500,000 and less population.

Mr. Laird was one of the founders and first president of the Wisconsin Broadcasters Assoc. For 25 years he was chairman of the Affiliates Board of the ABC network. Under Governor Knowles, Mr. Laird was chairman of the Radio Division of the State Education Radio and Television Board.

He began his radio career in 1931 as sports announcer for the Appleton Paper Makers at WHBY, Appleton, following which he was sports announcer for the Oshkosh All Stars Basketball Team and the Oshkosh Braves Baseball Team on station WOSH for which he was station manager for four years. He originated and was sports announcer of the Badger University of Wisconsin football network.

Mr. Laird was active in civic organizations and affairs. He was a past-president of the Appleton and Green Bay Lions Club and former member of the Lions Club at Oshkosh. For many years he served as chairman of the Board of the Fort Howard Award of Valor.

Mr. Laird was a past-president of the Green Bay Hockey Club, and was a director and member of the Executive Committee of the Packer Hall of Fame.

He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Convention Bureau of Green Bay, and was a member of the State Advisory Board to the Small Business Association. He was a member of the Allouez Police and Fire

Commission, and for many years he served on the local Cancer Board.

Mr. Laird was a member of the President's Committee of Carroll College, Waukesha, Wis.

Mr. Laird's fraternal associations included membership in the Odd Fellows Lodge of Green Bay of which he was a Past Noble Grand. He held membership in Koochiching Masonic Lodge No. 270 F and AM of International Falls, Minn.; Tripoli Temple, Milwaukee; Madison Consistory; and Green Bay Shrine Club.

He was an active member of the Pilgrim Congregational Church for which he served as trustee, and was a member of the Aquilla Men's Group of the church.

Mr. Laird held membership in the Oneida Golf and Riding Club.

Survivors include his wife and four children, Bonnie R. Laird, Minneapolis, Minn.; Mrs. William (Laurie) Lamberg, Manitowoc; Ben W. Laird and William C. Laird, both of Green Bay; three grandchildren, Karin, Erin and Ryan Lamberg.

He was preceded in death by his parents, one sister and two brothers.

Friends may call at the Findeisen-Greiser Funeral Home, 617 S. Roosevelt St., from 3 to 9 p.m. Friday, with Masonic memorial services at 8:30 p.m. Friends may then call at Pilgrim Congregational Church after 1 p.m. Saturday until time of services. Funeral 2 p.m. Saturday at the church with the Rev. Harvey Cutting officiating. Burial in Woodlawn Cemetery. A memorial fund has been established.